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Expensive Resources

For

Small Libraries

ANGE V. MILNER

State Normal University
Normal, Ill.

Read before Illinois Library Association, Springfield,
3, 1906.

THE
LIBRARY OF THE
MUSEUM OF
ART AND HISTORY
OF THE CITY OF
NEW YORK

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Inexpensive Resources for Small Libraries*

If I were fitting up the reference department of a new "small" library anywhere in Illinois, the first two books I should ask for would be the latest edition of the unabridged International dictionary, costing about \$8, and the current volume of the *Daily news* almanac, costing 30 cents. I never realized how many different questions an unabridged dictionary could answer, until I had a bright country boy for a "student assistant." I think his school library must have contained few books besides that dictionary. He went to it for almost every kind of information, and found it, too. Further experience has taught me that nearly everything that is not in the dictionary is in the almanac—current events, recent statistics, government institutions, etc., all treated concisely and satisfactorily, ~~the~~ *this* almanac making a specialty of Illinois.

Having these two books, what should we ask for next? If we decide to have a good cyclopedia, we want to know which to choose. If we begin to consider a cheap one, we find that the dictionary and almanac have reliable infor-

mation on a greater number of subjects and we don't need the unnecessary words or the red and yellow pictures of the cheap cyclopedia.

We have begun with two first-rate books. From the standpoint of the small library the unabridged dictionary may typify the line of standard, expensive reference works that we shall need, while the little almanac stands for the line of small, inexpensive publications that are also necessary. Having systematized our plans to that extent, we look for reliable book lists to help in making specific selections. Then again, the department may be greatly augmented by valuable publications to be had for the asking or for the cost of transportation. We must find what these are, and how to get them, and whether they will fully take the place of any books that we should otherwise have to buy.

We fully appreciate the facts that wise management means more money for books, and skillful arrangement and cataloging greatly augment the value of a small collection. We are anxious to accomplish these according to methods that experts will pronounce correct, that will prove satisfactory in our own libraries, and that will come within the powers of a library force perhaps even smaller than the library, and probably,

ke the reference books thus far selected, numbering only two.

Thus we find that before selecting book number three, we need to consider annotated book lists, free publications, and library economy as adapted to small libraries. My plan is to speak of some of the things that I have found particularly useful to a librarian trained only by friendly advice, observation, and experience in a small but growing and very active library.

First, the library economy; a variable science depending much on personality, environment, income, and immediate needs, but having a sound basis in its aim to promote "the best reading for the most people at the least expense."

There are three books that seem to me the simplest, clearest, and best adapted to a beginner. They are Mr Dana's Library primer; Miss Hitchler's A. L. A. library tract, Cataloging for small libraries; and Mr Wyer's New York state library bulletin, United States government documents. Would that all our other duties were treated by similar handbooks and with equal clearness, showing why to do things, how to do them, and what to omit.

Next comes the A. L. A. catalog for 1904, with its select, annotated lists. We can check it and our library is temporarily cataloged. We can turn to it

for a guide in buying, classifying, and cataloging. True, its classification is sometimes exasperating, but then our refuge is to fall back on Mr Dewey's explanation that a book is to be classified wherever it will be most useful, and put it there with a clear conscience. Our needs are sometimes different from those of the Albany library school.

With these four books, costing all together \$1.80, we have covered the ground once and can go to work. We shall buy the standard tools as we need them, Classification, Library school rules, and all the rest. A small pamphlet, How to catalog my library, to be had for the asking, and Esther Crawford's pamphlet, Cataloging, to be had for 25 cents, both from the Library Bureau, contain reliable information on that subject.

There are other helpful little things written especially for our use, Miss Plummer's Hints to small libraries, and several A. L. A. library tracts, each bringing its own message in its own best way. If we are going to work with the schools we shall need the N. E. A. Report of the committee on the relations of public libraries and public schools. It covers that subject better than anything else I know of, and costs 15 cents. We can not keep up with the times without a library magazine, and

Unfortunately the needs of the smaller libraries and the interests of the Middle West are especially considered by PUBLIC LIBRARIES, which is comfortably inexpensive. The new periodical, *Library work*, is a helpful little thing, to be had for the asking—a friendly message from the H. W. Wilson Company.

By the time we have begun to use these things to advantage we are ready for some economical library tools that at first sound decidedly expensive. Think for a moment of those libraries where clubs, teachers, pupils, and all the rest come for their reference work. Funds are limited and the earnest, overworked librarians examine books and magazines, depend on their memories, make reference lists and catalog as they can. Consider the time and strength thus expended in one year; the resulting weariness and the nervous anxiety because of the work crowded out; the library itself unable to give all the help for which it really has the resources, because of the constant hindrance of work undone, and the deprivations caused by material unclassified and uncataloged. Which is the more costly, such methods as these or an investment in magazine indexes, Library of congress cards, and a typewriter?

So much for library economy. Now let us turn to bibliographies. As you

know, there are excellent ones in some of the publications already specified. Of the many others useful to us, I shall only mention a few. We are under great obligations to the A. L. A. Publishing board for their consideration of our especial needs. Their Books for boys and girls, by Miss Hewins, is a first-class list of juvenile literature, costing 15 cents. Their Guide to reference books, by Miss Kroeger, will be of much service in helping to select that third and the next succeeding books for the reference department we are considering. The monthly numbers of the *A. L. A. booklist* keep us closely up to date, and inform us of the valuable bibliographies that the large libraries publish, and that they furnish so generously to the small ones. The best lists of books for school libraries apply directly to our needs. Notable among these are two: The list of books for township libraries is published by the Wisconsin state superintendent of education for 25 cents, and Annie Carroll Moore's List of books for a children's library is published by the Iowa library commission for 10 cents. The Illinois federation of women's clubs has considered the needs of Illinois children in a list, Books for the children and the home, costing 6 cents. It may be convenient to know that the *School news* is about to publish a Brief list of reference

books for schools below the high school. This was prepared in our library, and I shall be glad to mail a copy to any one sending in a "self-addressed stamped envelope." Another local bibliography of importance is by Mrs Jessie Palmer Veber on Illinois state history. It is published as Circular No. 1 of the Illinois state historical library, and is for free distribution. Some of the bibliographies from the Library of congress cover popular topics and aid greatly in our reference work.

While this memorandum might be extended indefinitely, the bibliographies mentioned will serve as an introduction to the entire field, and show us that exactly the help we need is at hand and within our means.

The two classes of resources thus far considered, library economy and elementary bibliography, have consisted essentially of tools for the librarian. Our third subject, Free publications, includes books and pamphlets for the benefit of our readers. A carefully chosen supply of these may change our other selections somewhat and make our dollars go farther.

How about beginning with a traveling library—or two? We have the Illinois farmers' institute and the Illinois federation of women's clubs to draw upon. Both furnish libraries for gen-

eral reading, and the State federation has some sets on purpose to help women's clubs. The expense is only that of transportation. The Farmers' institute at Springfield distributes a catalog. Information about the State federation libraries may be obtained from the chairman of that committee, Mrs Evelyn E. Jones, Henry, Ill.

But loans are by no means all that the state offers for our assistance. Are you being called upon for information about Illinois history, geography, and civics? Perhaps you have noticed the helpfulness of the Illinois Blue books, and the information about our geography, geology, and state institutions to be found in the report of the Illinois world's fair commissioners for 1893. Have you a copy of their World's fair report for 1904? It was only printed in a limited edition, but is very desirable. There is a state geological map in the State farmers' institute report for 1903 that is highly appreciated by scientists and the entire set is valuable in a reference library. The publications of the State historical association are valuable and interesting. Then there are the publications of state institutions, the reports and other scientific works of the State entomologist, the monographs issued in serial form by the University of Illinois, and by the several state nor

nals. These special publications are to be had from the institutions issuing them. Those by the state are supplied by the secretary of state, and all cost only the price of transportation.

While Illinois provides so much, the United States government does infinitely more, and without even charging us for transportation. If public documents were supplied with less freedom and more system, our involuntary thought would not so frequently be of them as a mass of dusty library lumber, encumbering the shelves, and puzzling the brains and vexing the spirit of the busy librarian. Are our constituents interested in California, birds, or gardening; Cuba, fruit growing or forestry; education, pure food, or Canada thistles; mosquitoes, statistics, or the Philippine islands? There is reliable, illustrated literature on each of these and hundreds of other subjects. Almost all may be had free through our congressman, and all are becoming more and more accessible by means of the Document catalog, and the cards from the Department of agriculture, the Library of congress, and the A. L. A. Publishing board.

Our problem is how to protect ourselves from the mass of public documents that we don't want; how to find out what there is that we do want; how to secure it and make it accessible to

the public. The helps are at hand as never before. First get a copy of Mr Wyer's Bulletin on United States government documents, to which I have already referred, and use it for a guide. Write to the superintendent of documents and to each department for their latest lists of publications for free distribution and for sale. To keep up to date on the subject, ask the Department of agriculture to send regularly its monthly list of publications, and subscribe for *Government publications*, a little periodical costing 50 cents a year, and published at 510 Twelfth st., Washington. It describes both United States and state publications that are of interest to the public. The Free library of Philadelphia has also begun issuing select monthly lists, but they are more limited in scope and more expensive than the one from Washington.

If we have done nothing whatever with the government publications that happen to be on hand, we are ready to follow these guides to the letter. If we have already begun on them, we have met difficulties that will make us appreciate these helps and use them all the more intelligently. In either case we shall soon appreciate the fact that a rich store of resources is open before us which will greatly increase the power for usefulness of our libraries.

Not long ago, I had a letter asking advice about spending \$10 for a school library. I wanted to write of how it might be further increased with a few government publications and some of the advertising booklets that are so useful for school and club work. All of you know what they are, the illustrated booklets issued by railways and large manufacturing companies.

Where can we find a better illustrated work on the Yellowstone park than Wonderland? It is very nearly equaled by the Canadian National park, and the whole great West is pictured and described in booklets on Colorado, California, the Yosemite, the Big trees, the Grand cañon, and all the rest.

Similar booklets for the Middle West, East, and South are issued by railroads in those sections of the country. Letters to the advertising, emigration, or passenger agent, explaining that the booklets will be put in the library and used for reference, usually meet with a generous response.

Throughout the West the boards of trade also have descriptive literature for distribution. Our geographical department has benefited by such publications from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and California.

For miscellaneous examples of other booklets of information issued as adver-

tisements, we have Pillsbury's Flour, the Corticelli Company's Silk, and the Pacific Coast Borax Company's Death valley. How are we to learn about them? Read advertisements and keep our eyes open. The picture on a package of pulverized borax made me think of writing to that company.

A collection of pictures of information is now one of the requisites of a reference library, and advertisers help to supply them. Some of their booklets are beautifully illustrated. One from the Chicago National Bank has colored reproductions of their frescoes of historic Chicago. The Singer Sewing Machine Company has sets of views illustrating pioneer history and United States scenery. They will send them for the postage, 1 cent a package.

Some of the railroads send out beautiful pictures upon occasion. Last fall they contributed generously to a picture exhibit which is described in PUBLIC LIBRARIES for January 1906. Many of the donations were undoubtedly sent to a state institution that would not be as accessible ~~as~~ a smaller place. Besides that, the undertaking cost a great deal of time and effort, together with the outlay of money, to secure, mount, arrange and care for about 350 pictures. The reward is a valuable and interesting collection that we use a great deal and

sometimes have the pleasure of loan-
ing.

The art department of the Normal university has had a good many picture exhibits. Some book publishers loan the originals of their illustrations, and art companies such as the Horace K. Turner Company, Boston, and the Art Education Company, Chicago, make a business of sending out exhibits. These are all advertisements. They always bring some expense and a great deal of work, but upon occasion the library benefits by the interest they create.

Corporations are as desirous of disseminating information as we are. They have developed the art of advertising to an extent that is greatly to our advantage. They have so many beautiful and helpful publications that if it were not so ephemeral, we should need a bibliography of advertising literature. As it is, we find it more useful to keep a memorandum of effective advertisers than of individual publications. The supply is so abundant and varied that this is another instance of the necessity of selecting only that which is needed to meet our particular requirements.

Evidently free publications include a wide range of resources beneficial to the public, reaching all the way from an advertising card to a traveling library and a scholarly monograph.

We have not yet selected our third book for the reference department of the small library. Perhaps you don't entirely agree with me about the first two. Book selection is a careful matter under such circumstances as ours. It becomes easier, the more we know about the subject and the more money and time we have. Perhaps this review of our resources will help us to increase our information with money and time. We have at our service the knowledge and advice of those wiser and more experienced to guide us in doing our work, saving our time and choosing our books. There are works on library economy that meet our needs and are within our means. There are bibliographies equally useful and accessible. There is valuable literature freely at our service, much of which we could not buy if we would. It will take time and intelligence to benefit by this abundance, and to increase the power and influence of our libraries as they may be increased. If we can only learn not to be penny wise and pound foolish, not to save a penny's worth of outlay at the expense of a pound's worth of time and effort, and to omit the nonessentials and attend to the essentials skillfully, we can accomplish it. And these resources themselves will help us to acquire this knowledge and skill.



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